

Clean Water Action Plan: *One Year Later*

The Clean Water Action Plan, announced by President Clinton and Vice President Gore on February 19, 1998, protects public health and restores our nation's precious waterways by setting strong goals and providing states, communities, farmers, and landowners the tools and resources to meet them. It charts a new course emphasizing collaborative strategies built around watersheds and the communities they sustain. For the past year, nine federal agencies have been working together to carry out the key actions in the Action Plan and assist state and local groups with their watershed work.

TVA's Role in Clean Water

When the TVA system was built, the focus was on harnessing the river's flow for navigation, flood control, and power production while demonstrating innovative solutions to the environmental and economic problems of the Tennessee Valley. In the last decade, water quality and recreation have emerged as high priorities to be included with TVA's original mission. In response, TVA has implemented two innovative programs:

- a Lake Improvement Plan aimed at improving water quality conditions below TVA dams and
- a Clean Water Initiative aimed at building community-based partnerships for watershed restoration.

Under the Lake Improvement Plan, TVA provides year-round minimum flows at all of its dams and operates aeration systems at 16 dams to increase dissolved oxygen levels in tailwater areas. This plan has resulted in improved conditions for aquatic life in over 300 miles of river.

TVA's Clean Water Initiative served as a model for the development of the Action Plan and received a Hammer Award from Vice President Al Gore in 1995. River Action Teams assigned to each of the region's 12 watersheds work to:

- provide information about resource conditions and potential solutions,
- engage local organizations and citizens,
- enhance collaboration among local, state, and federal agencies, and
- create incentives for voluntary adoption of conservation measures.

TVA's Role in the Clean Water Action Plan

TVA was actively involved in the development of the Action Plan and continues to share its watershed experience with others at the national level. TVA also plays a key role in implementing the Action Plan in the Tennessee Valley.



TVA is working across the region to build watershed partnerships and to achieve Action Plan goals related to polluted runoff, riparian areas and stream corridors, wetlands, source water protection, regional coordination and assistance, stewardship of federal lands and resources, and monitoring and reporting.

TVA's Clean Water Action Plan Accomplishments

Watershed partnerships: TVA River Action Teams worked with over 50 grassroots coalitions in communities across the Tennessee Valley in 1998. This included:

- providing support to established groups like the Guest River Restoration Project and the Middle Fork Holston Water Quality Committee in southwest Virginia and
- helping new citizen groups get organized in the watersheds drained by the Little River in East Tennessee, the Pigeon River in western North Carolina, and the Paint Rock River in northern Alabama.

Southeast Watershed Forum: TVA helped to organize and facilitate the Southeast Watershed Forum, one of the first regional forums to be established under the Action Plan. In its first six months, the Forum:

- published two newsletters featuring state and local watershed initiatives and
- sponsored a "roundtable" to discuss regional issues and Action Plan implementation.

Watershed protection and restoration: Working with local partners, TVA River Action Teams implemented almost 150 pollution reduction projects in 1998 and helped to:

- stabilize over 135,000 feet of streambank,
- improve 100 acres of critical shoreline fish habitat, and
- remove 4,000 tons of waste and litter from streambanks and shorelines.

Public land stewardship: TVA is entrusted with the management of 483,000 acres of public property and 11,000 miles of shoreline. To protect and improve these lands in 1998, TVA:

- stabilized 15 lake shoreline sites,
- surveyed about 30 percent of the shoreline for sensitive natural resources, wetlands, and cultural resources,
- restored 59 abused recreation areas, and
- developed plans to ensure the proper use and stewardship of about 34,000 acres.

Monitoring and assessment: In 1998, TVA:

- assessed ecological conditions in eight reservoirs and at 400 stream locations,
- checked fecal coliform levels at more than 100 recreation areas, and
- worked with state agencies to check fish for toxic contamination at 27 sites.

Future TVA Projects and Goals

TVA is committed to making the Tennessee River the cleanest, most productive, commercial river system in the United States. Much progress already has been made using the watershed approach laid out in the Action Plan. TVA will continue its efforts to engage watershed residents in resource protection and improvement and to build agency partnerships to help citizen groups achieve their clean water goals.

View the Action Plan and get updates on key actions on the Internet at <http://cleanwater.gov>, or call TVA's Clean Water Initiative at 423-751-8455.